

Enhancing Grade 8 Students' Speaking Skills Through the Use of Visual Aids: A Study at Mozambican Public Schools

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ABSTRACT

This study, entitled “*Enhancing Grade 8 Students' Speaking Skills through the Use of Visual Aids: A Study in Mozambican Public Schools*”, investigates the use of visual aids in improving learners' oral expression in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms. Guided by the pragmatist paradigm, the study adopted a mixed-methods approach and a descriptive research design to explore classroom practices from multiple perspectives. The study involved one English teacher and 89 Grade 8 students, of whom 82 completed questionnaires and seven participated in interviews. Data were collected through non-participant classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, questionnaires, and document analysis. Methodological triangulation was used to ensure the validity and reliability of the findings. Results indicate that teachers predominantly rely on chalkboard drawings and textbook images, while other visual resources such as flashcards, videos, and infographics are rarely used. Student engagement varied according to task complexity, with higher participation observed in structured drills and lower engagement in more demanding speaking tasks. In addition, document analysis revealed a lack of explicit guidance on the integration of visual aids in instructional planning, suggesting a gap between curriculum intentions and classroom practice. The study concludes that although visual aids have the potential to enhance learners' comprehension and oral expression, their effectiveness is limited by resource constraints and insufficient pedagogical integration.

Keywords: Classroom Engagement; Speaking Skills; Visual Aids; Grade 8 EFL Learners; English as a Foreign Language

INTRODUCTION

In Mozambique, English language instruction begins in Grade 6 and continues throughout subsequent educational levels, with the primary objective of developing learners' communicative competence. Within this framework, speaking skills constitute a central component of language acquisition. As Richards and Rodgers (1986) argue, language is primarily spoken, with writing and reading developing subsequently. Similarly, Zhang (2009) observes that learners acquire speaking skills before reading and writing, as oral production provides the foundation for meaningful communication. Consequently, learners who develop strong oral abilities are better prepared to participate in academic, professional, and international contexts where English functions as a lingua franca (Harmer, 2004).

Despite the recognised importance of speaking skills, learners in many EFL contexts continue to experience persistent difficulties in oral production. Research has shown that visual aids such as images, drawings, and illustrations can enhance language learning by improving comprehension, increasing motivation, and supporting spoken interaction (Doff, 1988; Harmer, 2004). However, much of the existing literature focuses on the general pedagogical benefits of visual aids, with limited attention to how these resources are actually implemented in classroom practice, particularly in under-resourced educational settings.

More specifically, there is a lack of empirical evidence on how visual aids are integrated into Grade 8 English

classrooms in Mozambican public schools, particularly in relation to speaking skills development. Existing studies tend to emphasise theoretical advantages rather than examining the frequency, types, and pedagogical effectiveness of visual aid usage in real classroom contexts. This lack of context-specific evidence limits understanding of how such resources contribute to actual oral language development in low-resource environments.

Classroom observations in Mozambican public schools indicate that Grade 8 learners continue to face significant challenges in speaking English after several years of instruction. Their oral production is often restricted to memorised expressions, while more communicative tasks involving description or personal expression remain difficult. Teachers frequently resort to the use of the mother tongue to support comprehension, which, although useful for understanding, may reduce opportunities for sustained English oral practice. In addition, students tend to use their first language as their dominant means of communication both inside and outside the classroom.

Against this background, this study examines the extent to which teachers use visual aids to enhance speaking skills among Grade 8 students in Mozambican public schools. By focusing on this under-researched context, the study contributes new empirical evidence on the actual classroom use of visual aids and their role in supporting oral expression, offering insights that may inform both pedagogical practice and educational policy.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Concepts

Speaking

According to Doff (1993), speaking is defined as the active use of language to communicate meaning to others. It involves producing systematic verbal utterances to express ideas, convey messages, and interact socially, requiring both linguistic competence (grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation) and the ability to manage interactive communication effectively.

As for Harmer (2001), speaking as the ability to speak fluently, which not only involves knowledge of the language's features (e.g., vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation) but also the capacity to process both information and language "on the spot."

Speaking, as conceptualized by Doff (1993), is viewed primarily as a social and interactive process, where communication is emphasized over linguistic accuracy. This perspective highlights the importance of meaningful interaction and the negotiation of ideas in real-life contexts. The use of speaking as a tool for conveying messages and engaging with others is central to this approach. However, it can be argued that insufficient attention to grammatical and lexical accuracy may result in gaps in learners' long-term language development.

In contrast, Harmer (2001) presents speaking as a skill that integrates both fluency and accuracy, emphasizing the cognitive and linguistic demands involved in real-time language production. This perspective provides a balanced approach, where meaningful communication is complemented by structured language competence. Nevertheless, the practical application of Harmer's model may be challenging, particularly in large classes or settings with limited resources, where achieving a balance between fluency and accuracy requires careful facilitation.

Taken together, these perspectives suggest that speaking should be approached as both a functional and structured skill. Doff's emphasis on interaction and communicative practice encourages engagement, while Harmer's focus on accuracy ensures that learners develop the necessary linguistic competence. An integrated approach, combining these elements, is considered most effective in promoting comprehensive speaking skills. So, in this context, speaking can be defined as a communicative skill that involves the interactive and meaningful exchange of ideas, while simultaneously requiring attention to linguistic accuracy and structure.

Speaking Skills

Speaking skills are defined as the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in a target language, combining both linguistic knowledge (grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation) and communicative competence (Brown, 2001)

Speaking skills refer to the ability to convey meaning accurately and fluently in a target language, involving the integration of linguistic competence (grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation) and pragmatic or communicative competence (the capacity to adapt language use to context, purpose, and audience) (Richards & Renandya, 2002).

Both Brown (2001) and Richards and Renandya (2002) conceptualise speaking skills as a multifaceted construct that encompasses not only linguistic competence but also communicative and pragmatic dimensions. Both definitions emphasise that effective speaking requires more than grammatical accuracy; it entails the ability to use language appropriately and meaningfully within a given social context. However, while Brown underscores the importance of appropriateness and effectiveness in communication, Richards and Renandya extend this perspective by highlighting fluency and adaptability to context, purpose, and audience, thereby offering a more comprehensive view of communicative performance.

From a critical perspective, Brown's definition may be regarded as more static, as it primarily focuses on the possession of linguistic and communicative knowledge without fully addressing the situational dynamics of language use. In contrast, Richards and Renandya adopt a more functional and context-sensitive stance that aligns closely with the principles of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). Their emphasis on contextual adaptability recognises that spoken interaction is inherently dynamic, requiring speakers to adjust their language according to social and pragmatic variables.

Therefore, both perspectives contribute valuable insights into the understanding of speaking skills. Brown's framework provides a solid foundation for linguistic and communicative competence, while Richards and Renandya's model advances this by incorporating the sociolinguistic and pragmatic realities of spoken discourse. Therefore, an integrated conceptualisation of speaking should synthesise these views, acknowledging that effective oral communication depends on the interplay between linguistic accuracy, fluency, and contextual appropriateness.

Visual aids

Visual aids are instructional tools that present information through visual forms, such as pictures, charts, diagrams, flashcards, and videos, to enhance learners' understanding, retention, and engagement (Mahmood, Bukhari & Bahoo, 2024). The same writers state that they function as cognitive and communicative supports that help learners process information more effectively by linking verbal content with visual representation. In language teaching, particularly in EFL contexts, visual aids facilitate vocabulary acquisition, stimulate oral interaction, and provide contextual cues that promote fluency and comprehension. Visual aids refer to any graphical, pictorial, or multimedia materials employed to support and enrich the teaching–learning process by making abstract or complex ideas more concrete and understandable. They serve as mediating tools that bridge linguistic input and learner comprehension, fostering attention, motivation, and active participation. In modern pedagogy, visual aids are recognised as essential components for multimodal learning environments that enhance both cognitive processing and communicative competence (Rahman, 2023).

Both Mahmood, Bukhari, and Bahoo (2024) and Rahman (2023) conceptualise visual aids as essential pedagogical tools that enhance learning through visual representation. Both perspectives underscore the role of visual materials—such as images, charts, and videos, in facilitating comprehension, retention, and learner engagement. However, the two definitions differ in their scope and pedagogical orientation. Mahmood et al. (2024) focus on the cognitive and communicative functions of visual aids, particularly within English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts. They emphasise how visual aids bridge the gap between verbal and non-verbal modes of input, supporting vocabulary learning and promoting oral interaction. Rahman (2023), by

contrast, presents a more holistic and theoretical interpretation, positioning visual aids within the broader framework of multimodal learning, where they not only assist understanding but also stimulate motivation and participation.

Critically, Mahmood et al. (2024) adopt a more applied perspective, providing concrete examples of how visual aids function within language instruction. Their emphasis on linking verbal and visual information aligns with dual coding theory, which posits that learning is strengthened when information is processed through multiple sensory channels. However, their definition is limited in that it remains largely instrumental, focusing on immediate classroom outcomes rather than broader pedagogical implications. Rahman (2023), conversely, offers a more integrative conceptualisation, situating visual aids within contemporary educational paradigms that value multimodality and learner agency. While this approach enriches the theoretical understanding of visual pedagogy, it may risk abstraction if not grounded in classroom realities.

Therefore, both perspectives contribute significantly to understanding the pedagogical value of visual aids. Mahmood et al. (2024) highlight their practical utility in language learning, while Rahman (2023) broadens the discussion to include their cognitive, motivational, and communicative dimensions. A comprehensive conceptualisation would, therefore, synthesise these viewpoints by recognising visual aids as both practical instructional tools and integral components of multimodal pedagogy that foster deeper cognitive processing, engagement, and communicative competence.

Types of Visual Aids in Language Instruction

Visual aids in language teaching include any visual or non-verbal tools and materials that assist in improving the teaching and learning process. These resources help learners grasp and remember language structures, vocabulary, and cultural aspects more effectively.

By engaging multiple senses and providing contextual clues, visual aids contribute to a better understanding and retention of content. Common examples include images, digital videos (such as YouTube), flashcards, infographics, and various media tools.

Images

Walter (2008) describes an image as any kind of picture, often produced by a lens or mirror. In the context of language education, images are used to illustrate vocabulary and present information visually, thus enhancing comprehension. Mayer (2009) notes that visual aids, including images, facilitate learning by offering context that supports memory and understanding, bridging the gap between abstract ideas and concrete examples.

Walter (2008) defines an image as any form of visual representation—typically produced through a lens or mirror—that conveys meaning through visual perception. Within the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction, this concept extends beyond mere depiction to encompass a pedagogical function, as images serve to illustrate vocabulary, clarify meaning, and provide visual scaffolding for learners who may struggle with purely linguistic input. Mayer (2009) complements this view by asserting that visual aids, including images, enhance learning by situating abstract language concepts within meaningful contexts, thereby facilitating comprehension, retention, and recall.

From a critical standpoint, both Walter and Mayer recognise the cognitive value of images in language learning, yet they approach the subject from slightly different angles. Walter's (2008) definition is descriptive and foundational, focusing on the nature of images as representational tools. Mayer (2009), on the other hand, situates the function of images within cognitive theory of multimedia learning, emphasising how visual and verbal channels operate together to enhance understanding. When applied to EFL contexts, Mayer's framework provides stronger pedagogical grounding, as it explains why and how images support language acquisition by linking visual stimuli with linguistic input, learners can form mental associations that aid comprehension and vocabulary retention.

However, both perspectives risk underemphasising the interactive and communicative potential of images in

EFL classrooms. Beyond serving as static visual supports, images can also act as stimuli for dialogue, description, and interpretation, encouraging learners to produce language actively rather than merely absorb it. Thus, when integrated into communicative activities—such as storytelling, discussion, or problem-solving tasks, images function not only as cognitive aids but also as catalysts for oral fluency and interaction.

So, while Walter (2008) and Mayer (2009) highlight the cognitive and illustrative functions of images in education, their ideas can be expanded within EFL pedagogy to include communicative and socio-interactive dimensions. A refined conceptualisation would define images as dynamic visual tools that both support comprehension through cognitive processing and stimulate verbal production through interaction, thereby enhancing learners' linguistic competence and communicative confidence.

Digital Videos and YouTube

Digital video is “an electronic representation of moving visual images in a digitally encoded form” (Wikipedia, 2025). Unlike analog video, digital video allows easy copying, sharing, and storage, consisting of a sequence of digital images displayed in rapid succession. Whereas, YouTube is an on-demand video platform that allows users to upload, watch, and share video content, largely free of charge. It was launched in 2005 and acquired by Google LLC in 2006 (Loomly, 2019).

Digital video is defined as “an electronic representation of moving visual images in a digitally encoded form” (Wikipedia, 2025). It differs from analog video in that it allows for efficient storage, replication, and distribution, consisting of a rapid sequence of digital images that create the perception of continuous motion. In educational contexts, digital video provides dynamic and multimodal input that can enhance learner engagement, illustrate abstract concepts, and support comprehension through visual and auditory channels.

YouTube, by contrast, is an on-demand video-sharing platform that enables users to upload, view, and disseminate video content freely or at minimal cost. Launched in 2005 and acquired by Google LLC in 2006 (Loomly, 2019), YouTube functions not only as a repository of audiovisual materials but also as an interactive space where learners and educators can access authentic content, tutorials, and demonstrations in diverse subject areas, including language learning.

Well analysed, both digital video and platforms such as YouTube extend the possibilities for multimodal instruction in EFL classrooms. Digital video provides structured visual-auditory material that can be designed or curated for specific pedagogical purposes, supporting comprehension and modeling language use. YouTube, in addition, introduces authentic, culturally relevant input and interactive opportunities, allowing learners to engage with native speakers, real-world contexts, and peer-generated content. However, reliance on such resources requires careful mediation to ensure relevance, accuracy, and alignment with learning objectives.

Therefore, digital video and YouTube represent complementary tools in contemporary EFL pedagogy: digital video delivers controlled, instructional content that scaffolds comprehension, while YouTube offers authentic, accessible, and interactive audiovisual resources that enrich language exposure and stimulate learner engagement. Together, they embody the potential of technology-enhanced, multimodal learning environments.

Flashcards

A flash card is “a card bearing information on both sides, used as an aid in memorization” (Oxford Languages, 2025). Typically, one side presents a question, term, or problem, and the other side provides the answer, definition, or solution. Flash cards are widely used in education to promote active recall, spaced repetition, and effective learning. Similarly, according to the Psychology Dictionary, a flash card is “a small card, the size of a playing card, with a picture or a word, or questions and answers on them. It is used as an aid to learning.” (Sam, 2013)

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Similarly, the Psychology Dictionary describes a flash card as “a small card, the size of a playing card, with a picture or a word, or questions and answers on them. It is used as an aid to learning” (Sam, 2013). Both definitions converge on the role of flash cards as tools that bridge visual or textual information with memory processes, making them particularly useful in language classrooms for vocabulary acquisition, concept reinforcement, and self-assessment exercises.

So, flash cards function not merely as passive visual aids but as interactive learning devices that engage learners cognitively, fostering retention and facilitating the internalization of linguistic and conceptual knowledge. In EFL contexts, their effectiveness is maximized when combined with activities that encourage oral practice, contextual usage, and peer interaction.

Infographics

Smiciklas (2012) defines an infographic as “a visualisation of data or ideas that tries to convey complex information to an audience in a manner that can be quickly consumed and easily understood” (p. 3). As for Krum (2014), an infographic as a form of graphic design that “combines data visualizations, illustrations, text, and images together into a format that tells a story” (p. 6).

An infographic is defined by Smiciklas as “a visualisation of data or ideas that tries to convey complex information to an audience in a manner that can be quickly consumed and easily understood” (p. 3). This definition emphasizes the role of infographics in simplifying and presenting intricate information for rapid comprehension. Krum further elaborates that an infographic is a form of graphic design that “combines data visualizations, illustrations, text, and images together into a format that tells a story” (p. 6). Here, the focus is on the narrative and integrative aspect of infographics, where multiple visual and textual elements work together to communicate a coherent message.

It can be concluded that the writers perspectives highlight that infographics function as multimodal tools that translate complex or abstract information into accessible and engaging visual formats. In educational contexts, particularly in EFL classrooms, infographics serve as effective visual aids by scaffolding comprehension, supporting vocabulary acquisition, and promoting cognitive engagement through the combination of textual and pictorial cues. Their use not only facilitates understanding but also encourages learners to synthesize information and interpret relationships between concepts in a visually coherent manner.

Media

In language classrooms, the concept of media encompasses both technological and traditional instructional tools. Capitalized Media refers to technological devices such as computers, software, and projectors, whereas lowercase media denotes conventional teaching aids, including charts and props (Brinton, 2001). Both forms serve to stimulate learners' senses and enhance comprehension, often reducing reliance on lengthy verbal explanations. According to Brinton (2001), media can also boost motivation by introducing real-world contexts that render language use more authentic, while simultaneously streamlining lesson delivery without prolonging instructional time.

Media accommodates diverse learning preferences visual, auditory, and kinesthetic, enabling educators to address varying student needs. Effectiveness, however, depends on the seamless integration of media into the lesson, rather than treating it as a supplementary addition. Brinton (2000) emphasizes that media diversifies teaching, simplifies instruction, individualizes learning, and actively engages students in meaningful language acquisition.

The alignment of visual aids with instructional objectives is essential for maximizing their educational impact. Clark and Lyons (2004) argue that visuals enhance memory through dual coding, wherein learners process verbal and visual information simultaneously. They further highlight the necessity of clear, concise visuals that

illustrate relationships, assisting students in constructing cause-and-effect mental models and fostering deeper understanding (Clark & Lyons, 2004; Carney & Levin, 2002).

Consequently, visual aids, including still images, flashcards, videos, and infographics, are indispensable in language teaching. When carefully selected and strategically integrated, these tools enrich the learning environment, support learners with diverse needs, and promote the development of effective communication skills.

Importance of Visual Aids to teach language

The integration of visual aids in language teaching is widely recognized as a strategy that enhances instructional effectiveness by making learning more meaningful and engaging. Brinton (2000) asserts that visual aids facilitate real-world connections, thereby increasing the relevance of classroom activities. Bamford (2003) further emphasizes that visual literacy is a critical skill for acquiring information, constructing knowledge, and achieving educational success, particularly in a society saturated with visual media (as cited in Harif & Hashim, 2009). Students enter the classroom with experiences shaped by media, which, according to Santas and Eaker (2009), should be leveraged rather than ignored; failure to do so risks overlooking important cognitive resources.

Empirical studies consistently demonstrate that visual aids enhance learning outcomes by improving interest, motivation, and comprehension (Anglin, Vaez, & Cunningham, 2004). Fang highlights additional benefits, including the stimulation of creativity, provision of cognitive support, and encouragement of aesthetic appreciation (as cited in Carney & Levin, 2002). Quantitative evidence supports these claims: Mukherjee and Roy (2003) report that comprehension can increase by up to 30% when visual aids are employed compared to traditional instruction without them.

Similarly, Canning-Wilson (2000) notes that visual aids reinforce spoken messages through paralinguistic cues, enhancing understanding. Clark and Lyons (2004) argue that visuals enable learners to construct mental models and grasp complex relationships more effectively than verbal explanations alone, while Canning-Wilson (1997) emphasizes their fundamental role in cognitive processing during language learning.

Collectively, these findings underscore the multifaceted value of visual aids in the language classroom, highlighting their capacity to support comprehension, cognitive engagement, and the meaningful integration of learners' prior media-influenced experiences.

METHODOLOGY

Research Paradigm

This study was guided by the pragmatist paradigm, which views reality as dynamic, multifaceted, and context-dependent. From this perspective, knowledge is shaped by practical consequences and lived experiences, with its value determined by its usefulness in addressing real-world problems (Morgan, 2007).

Pragmatism emphasises that both qualitative and quantitative forms of data are valid and complementary sources of evidence (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). This allows for the integration of multiple data types to develop a more comprehensive understanding of educational phenomena.

In this study, the pragmatist paradigm provided a suitable framework for examining the use of visual aids in teaching speaking skills to Grade 8 learners in Mozambican public schools by combining classroom observations, interviews, and survey data.

Research Approach

This study adopted a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative methods. The qualitative

component explored participants' experiences and classroom practices, while the quantitative component measured the extent and frequency of visual aid usage.

A convergent mixed-methods design was used, with data collected concurrently through interviews, questionnaires, observations, and document analysis. The integration of datasets allowed for triangulation and a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under study (Dawson, 2002; Kauark et al., 2010).

Research Design

A descriptive research design was employed within the mixed-methods framework. According to Kothari (2004), descriptive design provides an accurate representation of a phenomenon without manipulation of variables.

In this study, it enabled a systematic description of classroom practices, particularly the use of visual aids in teaching speaking skills in Grade 8 English classrooms.

Research Instruments

The study used four data collection instruments: semi-structured interviews, questionnaires, non-participant observation, and document analysis. These instruments ensured triangulation and captured multiple perspectives on classroom practices.

Semi-structured Interview

Semi-structured interviews allow guided but flexible interaction between the researcher and participants (Cervo & Bervian, 2002; Oliveira, 2011).

Interviews were conducted with one English teacher and seven Grade 8 students. Questions focused on types of visual aids used, student engagement, and perceived effectiveness in developing speaking skills.

Questionnaire

A questionnaire is a structured instrument used to collect data on respondents' attitudes and behaviours (Babbie, 2016).

It was administered to Grade 8 students to gather quantitative data on visual aid usage and student engagement. It was completed over three days and collected on the fourth day.

Non-Participant Observation

Non-participant observation involves observing classroom activities without researcher interference (Creswell, 2014).

It was used to examine Grade 8 English lessons, focusing on visual aid usage and student engagement.

Document Analysis

Document analysis involves examining relevant written materials such as lesson plans and curriculum documents (Barbosa, 2012).

It was used to analyse how visual aids are planned and integrated into teaching practices.

Instrument Development and Validity Checks

The instruments were developed based on literature on visual aids and speaking skills in EFL contexts. Items were aligned with the research objectives and informed by previous studies.

Validity was ensured through expert review by two experienced English educators, focusing on clarity and relevance. A pilot study with Grade 8 students was conducted to refine the questionnaire.

Reliability was strengthened through methodological triangulation, using multiple data sources to cross-check and confirm findings.

Target Population

The target population of this study consisted of Grade 8 students and English teachers in Mozambican public schools (day shift).

Participants and Sampling Techniques

The study involved a total of 90 participants, comprising eighty-nine (89) Grade 8 students from eleven (11) Mozambican public schools across different provinces and one (1) Grade 8 English teacher.

From the student sample, eighty-two (82) participants completed questionnaires, while seven (7) students and the teacher participated in semi-structured interviews. Additionally, classroom observations were conducted across the eleven schools, with one English lesson observed in each school as the unit of analysis.

A combination of sampling techniques was used. The teacher was selected through purposive (non-probability) sampling, while students were selected using random sampling techniques. Details are presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Participants

Participants of the study				Total	Place of the study
Teachers		Students		90	Mozambican Public Schools
Male	Female	Male	Female		
1	0	45	44		

Source: The researcher, 2026

The study was conducted in Mozambican public schools over a period of three months, following a sequential data collection process.

In the first month, classroom observations were conducted in eleven (11) Grade 8 English lessons across eleven schools to examine the use of visual aids and student engagement in speaking activities. In the second month, semi-structured interviews were carried out with one English teacher and seven (7) students to explore classroom practices and perceptions regarding the use of visual resources. In the third month, a questionnaire was administered to eighty-two (82) students over a three-week period via Google Forms.

This sequential process enabled systematic data collection and facilitated methodological triangulation, thereby strengthening the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings.

Ethical issues

Ethical considerations in this study were guided by the principles of respect, confidentiality, and informed consent (Cooper & Schindler, 2014). Participants were informed about the purpose of the study and voluntarily agreed to participate.

Confidentiality and anonymity were ensured throughout the research process. To protect participants' identi-

ties, a coding system was used, whereby the teacher was identified as Tr and students as St1 to St7 (Lakatos & Marconi, 2003). All data were used strictly for academic purposes, and all sources were appropriately cited and referenced.

Data analysis Techniques

Data analysis in this study was based on methodological triangulation, enabling the integration of qualitative and quantitative data from multiple sources. Triangulation enhances the comprehensiveness and credibility of findings by combining different perspectives on the same phenomenon (Dawson, 2022; Turner & Turner, 1970, as cited in Altrichter et al., 1996).

Qualitative data from interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis were analysed using content analysis. Data were transcribed, organised into categories, and interpreted thematically without the use of statistical procedures. This approach enabled a systematic examination of participants' views and classroom practices (Cooper & Schindler, 2014).

Quantitative data from questionnaires were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), generating descriptive statistics, particularly frequencies and percentages, which were presented in tables.

The integration of qualitative and quantitative findings was conducted through comparison and interpretation of convergent results, strengthening the methodological coherence and interpretive depth of the study.

Data Presentation, Analysis and Interpretation

Data Presentation, Analysis and Interpretation

This section presents, analyses, and interprets data collected through interviews, classroom observations, questionnaires, and document analysis. The findings are organised according to the research objectives.

Interview Data

This section presents data collected from semi-structured interviews conducted with one English teacher and seven Grade 8 students. All participants responded to the interview questions in line with the study objectives, as presented in the categories below.

Table 2: Data from interview

Category	Question	Answers
the types of visual resources most commonly used by teachers of grade 8 in the classrooms	To identify the types of visual resources most commonly used by teachers of grade 8 in the classrooms;	Tr said due to a lack of resources, use what is available; however, they mainly rely on images from the students' textbooks. However he stated that he sometimes reproduce photocopies and occasionally draw on the blackboard, also due to limited resources in the schools. In the same vein, St1, St2, St3, and St4 reported that their teachers primarily use images from textbooks. Additionally, St4 mentioned the use of flashcards. Meanwhile, St5 and St6 noted that their teachers make use of natural images. Furthermore, St7 said that their teachers employ a variety of visual materials, including textbook images and even some they create themselves.
The level of student engagement in activities designed to enhance speaking skills through the use of	To assess the level of student engagement in activities designed to	Tr stated that student involvement tends to vary depending on the activity. According to them, certain tasks are more complex, and due to students' limited

visual aids;	enhance speaking skills through the use of visual aids.	language proficiency, engagement is often low. Consequently, teachers sometimes feel compelled to resort to the mother tongue to facilitate understanding. Likewise, St1 and St2 expressed that overall engagement has been limited, emphasising that mere participation is not the same as genuine involvement. In contrast, St3, St4, and St5 described engagement as moderate, noting that although students generally attempt to follow the teacher's instructions, fewer than half manage to perform well. On the other hand, St6 and St7 viewed student engagement as negative, suggesting a lack of motivation or interest during lessons.
Effective methods, techniques, and strategies for utilizing visual aids to foster oral expression skills in the classroom.	To propose effective methods, techniques, and strategies for utilizing visual aids to foster oral expression skills in the classroom.	Tr affirmed that the government should invest in materials and modern visual aids and build teachers' capacity to use them. Additionally, the teacher stated that they should invests in appropriate visual aids like pictures, flashcards, and short videos that support comprehension without overwhelming students. St1 and St2 said that while the use of the mother tongue should be minimized in language learning environments, occasionally and strategically using it can be effective for clarifying complex instructions or concepts, especially at lower proficiency levels. In contrast, St3 and St4 said there should be investment in materials and a focus on fostering a supportive classroom atmosphere where mistakes are seen as learning opportunities. They also emphasized celebrating small successes and providing regular feedback to build learners' confidence in using the language. St5 said to provide training on using visual aids effectively and strategies for managing mixed-ability classes. St6 said to incorporate pair and group activities (such as role-plays, dialogues, and games) where students practice speaking in a low-pressure setting. He also recommended interactive methods like think-pair-share, peer teaching, and visual storytelling. Finally, St7 encouraged reflective teaching so educators can adapt methods based on student responses and engagement.

Researcher's source, 2026

Based on the interview data, three main themes were identified: (1) types of visual resources used by teachers, (2) student engagement in speaking activities, and (3) strategies for improving the use of visual aids in classroom practice.

Theme 1: Types of Visual Resources Used

Findings indicate that the use of visual aids in Grade 8 classrooms is largely limited to textbook images, primarily due to resource constraints in public schools. These are occasionally supplemented by blackboard drawings and photocopies, while flashcards, natural images, and teacher-designed materials are used less frequently.

This pattern suggests that visual support in classroom practice is dominated by low-cost and readily available resources, which may restrict opportunities for more varied and communicative speaking activities that require richer visual input.

Theme 2: Student Engagement in Speaking Activities

The findings reveal that student engagement in speaking tasks supported by visual aids is uneven and context-dependent. While visual materials help facilitate comprehension, they do not consistently translate into active oral participation.

Teachers reported that engagement tends to decline when tasks increase in complexity or exceed learners' linguistic proficiency, often leading to the use of the mother tongue as a compensatory strategy. Similarly, students described their participation as ranging from moderate to limited, suggesting that visual aids alone are insufficient to sustain meaningful oral interaction without appropriate pedagogical support.

Theme 3: Strategies for Improving the Use of Visual Aids

Participants emphasised that improving the effectiveness of visual aids requires both institutional and pedagogical interventions. Teachers highlighted the need for professional training and improved access to instructional materials, while students advocated for more interactive, learner-centred approaches such as role-plays, group discussions, peer teaching, and visual storytelling.

Collectively, these suggestions indicate that the pedagogical value of visual aids depends not only on their availability, but also on how they are integrated into communicative teaching strategies that actively promote student interaction and oral production..

Data from observation form

A total of eleven (11) Grade 8 English lessons were observed across Mozambican public schools, with one school selected per province. The observations focused on the use of visual aids in teaching speaking skills and students' engagement in classroom activities.

The aim of this section was to analyse how visual resources are used by teachers and how they influence students' participation in speaking activities. The results are presented in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Observation outcomes

Ord.	Observed strategies	Specific objectives	Observation outcomes
01	Teacher using different types of visual to teach grade 8 students;	To identify the types of visual resources most commonly used by teachers of grade 8 in the classrooms;	Apart from the board, no other types of visual aids were used in that context, and the teacher quickly moved on to exercises unrelated to the vocabulary.
02	Students engaging the activities carried out to promote oral expression skills through visual aids in the classroom.	To assess the level of student engagement in activities designed to enhance speaking skills through the use of visual aids.	Yes, during the drill, students were actively engaged and demonstrated understanding of the vocabulary.

Researcher's source, 2026

Ord 1: Use of Visual Aids

The classroom observations reveal a strong reliance on the board as the primary visual aid in Grade 8 English

lessons. No additional resources such as flashcards, charts, images, or videos were observed, and lessons frequently shifted to exercises that were not directly connected to the vocabulary being introduced.

This pattern suggests a limited pedagogical use of visual aids, which restricts instructional diversity and may reduce opportunities for learners to engage in meaningful and contextualised speaking activities.

Ord 2: Student Engagement

Despite the limited use of visual aids, students were observed to participate actively during drill-based activities, showing attention and basic understanding of the vocabulary presented.

This indicates that even minimal visual support can facilitate short-term engagement and comprehension. However, the absence of varied and interactive visual materials appears to limit deeper oral interaction and sustained communicative practice, suggesting that the full pedagogical potential of visual aids remains underexploited.

Data from questionnaire

The questionnaire was administered to a sample of 82 Grade 8 students selected through random sampling from five classrooms. Respondents completed the questionnaire over a period of three days, allowing sufficient time for careful reading and response. The results are presented in Table 4 below.:

Table 4: Data from questionnaire: Use, frequency, types of visual aids, and student engagement

Category	Response / Type	Number of Participants	Percentage (%)
Use of Visual Aids	Yes	68	82.9%
	No	14	17.1%
Frequency of Use	Never (0%)	18	21.95%
	Hardly ever (10%)	20	24.39%
	Rarely (20%)	36	43.90%
	Seldom (30%)	2	2.44%
	Occasionally (40%)	2	2.44%
	Sometimes (50%)	4	4.88%
	Often to Always (60–100%)	0	0.00%
Types of Visual Aids Used	Drawing on the chalkboard	60	73.17%
	Images from books	10	12.20%
	Images by teachers	5	6.10%
	Atlases	3	3.66%
	Flashcards	3	3.66%
	Digital videos and YouTube	1	1.22%
	Infographics	0	0.00%
	Media and teaching platforms	0	0.00%
Student Engagement	Yes	34	41.5%
	No	48	58.5%
Extent of Engagement with Visual Aids	Little	30	36.6%
	More or less	35	42.7%
	Much	17	20.7%
Total Participants		82	100%

Researcher's source, 2026

The questionnaire results indicate that, although a majority of participants (82.9%) acknowledge the use of visual aids in English lessons, their application is generally infrequent and inconsistent in practice. This

suggests a gap between perceived presence and meaningful instructional integration of visual materials in classroom teaching.

In terms of frequency, the data reveal that visual aids are rarely used in a systematic way, with most responses indicating “never,” “hardly ever,” or “rarely.” Very few participants reported regular use, and none indicated consistent or frequent integration. This pattern suggests that visual aids are not embedded as a structured pedagogical strategy, but rather used sporadically depending on teacher preference or lesson context.

Regarding the types of visual aids employed, the findings show a strong dominance of traditional, low-resource materials, particularly chalkboard drawings and textbook images. In contrast, teacher-produced materials and manipulatives such as flashcards are minimally used, while digital resources (e.g., videos and YouTube) are almost entirely absent. This indicates limited diversification of visual strategies, likely influenced by resource constraints and limited technological integration in classrooms.

With respect to student engagement, the results reveal mixed levels of participation. While a minority of learners report high engagement, the majority experience low to moderate involvement in activities involving visual aids. This suggests that the presence of visual materials alone does not guarantee active participation, and that engagement is strongly influenced by how these resources are pedagogically used within speaking activities.

Therefore, the findings point to a consistent pattern: visual aids are present in Mozambican Grade 8 EFL classrooms, but their use is limited in scope, traditional in form, and insufficiently structured to consistently promote active student engagement in speaking skills development..

DISCUSSION

Types of Visual Resources Used by Grade 8 Teachers

The findings indicate a strong reliance on basic and low-cost visual resources, particularly chalkboard drawings, in Grade 8 English classrooms. This limited range of materials suggests that visual aids are not systematically integrated into teaching practice but are instead used in an ad hoc manner depending on teacher initiative.

This pattern reflects a gap between pedagogical recommendations in the literature and actual classroom implementation. According to Rahman (2023), visual aids should be part of a multimodal learning environment that systematically supports comprehension, interaction, and learner engagement. Similarly, Mahmood, Bukhari, and Bahoo (2024) argue that visual resources such as images, charts, and videos play both cognitive and communicative roles, and their absence can limit opportunities for meaningful language learning.

The predominance of traditional resources may be explained by structural constraints, particularly the lack of explicit guidance in the scheme of work and limited access to teaching materials. In line with Clark and Lyons (2004), effective visual design and use depend not only on availability but also on instructional planning that integrates visuals to support dual coding and meaningful learning processes.

From a pedagogical perspective, this limited use of visual aids may restrict opportunities for meaningful language input and oral production. Visual resources such as images, flashcards, and videos are known to support vocabulary acquisition and stimulate speaking activities by providing contextualised prompts. Their absence reduces opportunities for interaction and learner-centred instruction.

Therefore, the findings suggest that the challenge is not only resource availability but also the absence of structured pedagogical integration of visual aids within the curriculum. Strengthening curriculum guidance and providing targeted teacher training could help bridge this gap between theory and practice in EFL classrooms.

Student Engagement in Activities Using Visual Aids

The triangulated data from questionnaires, classroom observations, interviews, and document analysis indicate

that student engagement in speaking activities supported by visual aids is moderate but inconsistent.

Questionnaire results show that 41.5% of students reported active engagement, while 58.5% indicated low or no engagement. Classroom observations support this pattern, showing that students tend to participate more during simple drill-based activities, particularly when using board drawings or textbook images. However, their attention decreases when tasks become more complex or less structured. Teachers also reported that engagement varies depending on task difficulty, language proficiency, and the type of visual aid used.

These findings suggest that the presence of visual aids alone is not sufficient to guarantee sustained student engagement in speaking activities. Instead, engagement appears to be closely linked to how visual resources are pedagogically integrated into classroom tasks.

From a contextual perspective, this pattern reflects a predominantly teacher-centred instructional approach, where visual aids are often used as supportive illustrations rather than interactive tools for communication. As a result, student participation tends to remain at a surface level rather than developing into meaningful oral interaction.

This finding is consistent with Brinton (2000), who argues that visual materials only enhance learning when they are embedded in meaningful, real-world and communicative classroom activities. Similarly, Clark and Lyons (2004) emphasise that visual aids contribute to learning through dual coding only when they are purposefully designed and integrated into instructional processes that promote active cognitive engagement. In contrast, when visuals are used merely as illustrations, their pedagogical impact remains limited.

Therefore, the study suggests that improving student engagement requires more than introducing visual materials. It requires a shift towards learner-centred pedagogies in which visual aids are embedded in communicative activities such as pair work, role-plays, and collaborative tasks. Additionally, curriculum guidance and teacher training are necessary to support the effective pedagogical use of visual resources for promoting oral communication skills.

Effective Methods, Techniques and Strategies

The triangulated data from observations, interviews, questionnaires, and document analysis indicate that the use of visual aids to support oral expression in Grade 8 EFL classrooms is currently limited, although both teachers and students recognise their pedagogical potential.

Classroom observations show that teachers mainly rely on chalkboard drawings and textbook images, with minimal use of more interactive visual resources such as flashcards, videos, or digital media. This suggests that visual aids are largely used in a supportive rather than interactive way, which limits their communicative potential. The absence of explicit guidance in the scheme of work further reinforces this limited and inconsistent use.

However, interview data reveal that teachers are aware of more effective and engaging strategies, including the use of pictures, short videos, and flashcards, while students emphasise the importance of interactive activities such as role-plays, group work, dialogues, and peer teaching. These suggestions reflect a shared understanding that visual aids are most effective when integrated into communicative tasks rather than used for illustration alone.

This perspective is supported by Brinton (2001), who argues that instructional media, including visual materials, should be fully integrated into lesson design to promote meaningful language use and learner engagement. Similarly, Rahman (2023) emphasises that visual aids are most effective when embedded within multimodal and learner-centred pedagogies that promote active participation and communication. In addition, Clark and Lyons (2004) highlight that visual materials enhance learning through dual coding only when they are purposefully designed and aligned with instructional objectives that encourage active cognitive processing.

From a pedagogical perspective, this gap between awareness and practice indicates that the main challenge is

not a lack of knowledge about visual aids, but rather their effective integration into structured speaking activities. The findings suggest that current practices remain largely teacher-centred, which reduces opportunities for meaningful oral interaction.

These results partially align with the literature, which highlights the importance of visual aids in supporting comprehension, vocabulary development, and learner engagement. However, the present study emphasises that these benefits are only fully realised when visual resources are embedded within interactive, learner-centred pedagogies.

Therefore, improving learners' oral expression skills requires more than the introduction of visual materials. It requires a shift towards structured communicative use of visuals through activities such as role-plays, discussions, storytelling, and collaborative tasks, supported by teacher training and curriculum guidance that explicitly integrates visual aids into speaking instruction.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the extent to which teachers use visual aids to enhance speaking skills among Grade 8 EFL students in Mozambican public schools. The findings indicate that the use of visual aids is limited and largely restricted to traditional resources such as chalkboard drawings and textbook images, while more interactive and digital tools remain underutilised.

Student engagement in speaking activities supported by visual aids is inconsistent and influenced by task design, language proficiency, and teaching strategies. Although visual aids can support participation, their impact depends on how effectively they are integrated into classroom practice.

The study further suggests that the effective use of visual aids requires not only access to diverse resources but also pedagogical strategies that promote interaction, such as communicative tasks and learner-centred activities. Teacher training and curriculum support are essential to strengthen this integration.

Therefore, the study highlights the need to move from traditional, teacher-centred use of visual aids towards more structured and interactive approaches that support the development of speaking skills in EFL classrooms.

RECOMMENDATION

For Government and Educational Policymakers:

- **Provision of Visual Resources:** Ensure that schools are adequately equipped with diverse visual aids, including flashcards, images, infographics, digital videos, and media platforms, to support communicative and interactive teaching practices.
- **Curriculum and Scheme of Work Revision:** Integrate clear guidelines in the curriculum and scheme of work regarding the use of visual aids in language teaching, specifying types of materials and recommended instructional strategies for enhancing speaking skills.

For Teachers:

- **Interactive and Learner-Centered Approaches:** Incorporate interactive activities such as role-plays, dialogues, group discussions, peer teaching, and storytelling to maximize the effectiveness of visual aids in developing oral expression skills.
- **Reflective and Adaptive Teaching:** Continuously assess student engagement and learning outcomes, adapting the selection and use of visual aids to meet students' language proficiency, learning styles, and task complexity.

For Students:

- **Active Participation and Engagement:** Engage actively in classroom activities involving visual aids, taking initiative to practice speaking, ask questions, and participate in collaborative exercises to enhance speaking skills.
- **Utilization of Supplementary Materials:** Use available resources, including textbooks, flashcards, digital videos, and online platforms such as YouTube, to reinforce classroom learning and develop autonomous language practice outside school.

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